

South branch library opens new digs with WOWs

Timothy Chipp, Abilene Reporter-News 6:25 p.m. CST November 19, 2016



(Photo: Thomas Metthe/Reporter-News)

Abilene Mayor Norm Archibald had several opportunities to catch a glimpse inside the south branch of the Abilene Public Library inside the Mall of Abilene. But the mayor said he'd rather have himself a "Wow Moment" walking through the doors with the general public when the branch officially opened its doors to patrons Saturday morning.

He said he got it shortly after making his way inside.

"I am wowed," Archibald said shortly before being drowned out by music played by the Hardin-Simmons University Cowboy Marching Band. "I am wowed by the layout, I'm wowed by all the conference rooms."

Rebecka Davis, who was visiting the library with her daughter, Karma, and other family members, said she was blown away by what she saw from the new branch's design, including the color scheme and, like the mayor, all of the rooms the new facility has at its disposal.

She said she's been taking her children to the downtown branch on North Second and Cedar streets since the old south branch closed earlier this year. Having a library closer to home is important to her, she said.



Baylor Betts, 4, hugs one of the Three Little Pigs during the opening of the Abilene Public Library's new south branch location at the Mall of Abilene on Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016. (Photo: Thomas Metthe/Reporter-News)

Karma said she was just excited she got to meet real life versions of her favorite fairy tale characters, the Three Little Pigs. Characters from the Children's Arts and Literacy Festival meandered throughout the library taking pictures with the children -- and some adults -- throughout the morning.

Before the doors opened, several library and city dignitaries spoke about the upgrade from the old facility on South 14th Street.

Matt Preston, outgoing president of the Friends of the Abilene Public Library, said his group was responsible for raising the funds to build the \$1.5 million facility in about six months time. They put down \$500,000 of the Friends' own cash, sought \$500,000 from area foundations and received the remaining \$500,000 from the community as a whole.

There was no taxpayer contribution, he said.

"I cannot be happier," he said about the new facility. "I want it to get used a lot. I hope it gets worn out, in a good way."



The Hardin-Simmons University Cowboy Band marches through the south branch of the Abilene Public Library to celebrate the library's opening at its new location at the Mall of Abilene on Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016. (Photo: Thomas Metthe/Reporter-News)

Bob and Danelle Brand popped in Saturday morning to see the space and also were blown away by what they saw. Danelle said she was particularly impressed with the new "Teen Room" set off from the main library with age-appropriate materials and books.

Even though they're both long removed from the days of being a teenager, with grown children of their own, the couple said that space looked particularly fancy.

"It's really a multipurpose room," she said.

The south branch inside the mall will offer expanded youth, adolescent and adult learning opportunities as it transitions from opening to business-as-usual. For a complete list of library events, classes and other schedules, visit the [library's website here \(http://www.abilenetx.com/apl\)](http://www.abilenetx.com/apl).



Paisley Goolsby, 4, gets a balloon animal from magician Randy Naylor during the opening of the Abilene Public Library's new south branch location at the Mall of Abilene on Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016. (Photo: Thomas Metthe/Reporter-News)



Judie Eichorst (center) gets help finding a book from librarian assistant, Cynthia Gault, during the opening of the Abilene Public Library's new south branch location at the Mall of Abilene on Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016. (Photo: Thomas Metthe/Reporter-News)

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